

## Michaud Builds Support for Trail Program Important to Maine

Friday, May 06 2011

Joins Wisconsin Republican to send letter signed by 74 members of Congress

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Mike Michaud has joined with Congressman Tom Petri (R-WI) to send a letter signed by a bipartisan group of their colleagues to the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee urging it to support the successful Recreational Trails Program (RTP) in the surface transportation reauthorization bill that will be considered later this year.

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“This is a program that’s been used successfully in Maine for years,” said Michaud, a member of the T&I Committee. “It’s helped build bridges in Millinocket, Bingham, Houlton, and Andover. It’s also provided funding for improvements to trails in every corner of our state. Maine has used this program very effectively, and I’ll continue to build support for it moving forward.”

In working to support RTP, Michaud contacted a number of Maine organizations to get their take on the importance of the program.

“Maine’s winter tourism economy in small rural communities is driven by snowmobiling with an estimated economic value of \$350 million annually. Our 14,000-mile trail system is built and maintained by volunteers, and would not be possible without the assistance of the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). From relatively small bridge projects across the state to major multi-use rail-trail conversions, RTP funding has made countless projects to improve our trail system possible. The continuation of the program will ensure that our 290 snowmobile clubs statewide may continue to help improve Maine’s tourism opportunities in their communities.” – Bob Meyers, Executive Director of the Maine Snowmobile Association

“Over the last three years, we have evolved from an inspiring idea and a compelling vision, to an award-winning outdoor destination, hosting more than 5000 visits over the last year alone. We currently operate more than 35 miles of trails and three full-service eco-lodges (huts) between Kingfield/Carrabassett Valley and Rt 201/The Forks. In 2009, we received \$15,000 in funding from the Recreational Trails Program to support the construction of a trailhead parking facility along the east shore of Flagstaff Lake. This parking facility has been critical in enabling us to accommodate the volume of visitors we’re attracting. We currently have a request pending with RTP for \$25,000. Securing all (or a significant portion) of this grant will enable us to complete our Dead River Trail, thus connecting the Rte 16/27 corridor with the Rte 201 corridor, creating a significant tourism draw to the region and helping to support several jobs. Additionally, these funds will be matched many times over by funding secured through private philanthropy.” – Dave Herring, Executive Director of Maine Huts and Trails

According to a report prepared by the Maine Department of Conservation in 2009, the RTP program has provided Maine with over \$4 million in federal funding from 2004 to 2009 to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail related facilities for both motorized and non-motorized trail uses. This is in addition to the sponsors’ \$2 million in local match. Grants can be awarded to non-profits, municipal agencies, state agencies and other governmental agencies (Indian tribal governments and County governments). The program has been instrumental in the continuing development and maintenance of Maine’s vast trail network.

Funds have been used for trails from Kittery to Fort Kent and many places in between. Projects have been as simple as a ½ mile walking trail in China to major bridge construction in Millinocket, Bingham, Andover and Houlton. Requests have exceeded available funds each year with many worthy trail projects having to delay or downsize their trail project. In Maine these trails are a major attraction to visitors, and they have been shown to provide millions of dollars in economic benefits and much needed jobs related to these projects. Failure to reauthorize the funding for this program would have a great impact on our trail system and its benefit to the State of Maine.

The full text of the letter sent by Michaud and his colleagues can be found below.

Dear Chairman Mica, Ranking Member Rahall, Chairman Duncan and Ranking Member DeFazio:

We write to express our strong support for continuing the successful Recreational Trails Program (RTP) in the surface transportation reauthorization bill.

The philosophy behind the RTP is simple: fuel taxes collected from non-highway users should benefit those who paid the taxes. This is similar to the Wallop-Breaux program, where boaters benefit from the fuel taxes they pay. As the Committee works to streamline and consolidate programs, it should continue to recognize the unique character of this program.

Since its creation in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991, the RTP has brought new economic vitality to communities across the nation, helped Americans to be active and healthy, and unified often-divided trail interests to craft state trail plans and aid all trail interests. More than 15,000 projects have been funded under this program to date, including trail corridor purchases, trail construction and maintenance, and environmental mitigation.

We were pleased that the RTP has been funded under every reauthorization since 1991, and we request that adequate and fair funding be included in the next reauthorization bill. Since the RTP is supported by taxes on fuel used in off-highway recreational vehicles, we request a DOT study of off-highway recreational fuel use to ensure that the level of RTP funding reflects the federal fuel taxes paid by off-highway users. Finally, we ask that the funds allocated to the FHWA to administer the RTP each year be established at a base of \$840,000 (current law) or as 1% of actual funds available, whichever is higher, to ensure that sufficient administrative resources are available for this valuable program.

Thank you for your consideration of the successful and unique Recreational Trails Program.

Sincerely,

- 1 Mike Michaud
- 2 Tom Petri
- 3 Mike Simpson
- 4 Mike Ross
- 5 Dale Kildee
- 6 Earl Blumenauer

- 7 Allyson Y. Schwartz
- 8 Mel Watt
- 9 G. K. Butterfield
- 10 Eleanor Holmes Norton
- 11 Mazie Hirono
- 12 Raul M. Grijalva
- 13 Tammy Baldwin
- 14 Joe Courtney
- 15 Peter Welch
- 16 Lloyd Doggett
- 17 John F. Tierney
- 18 Albio Sires
- 19 Stephen F. Lynch
- 20 Bob Filner
- 21 Maurice D. Hinchey
- 22 Walter B. Jones
- 23 James P. Moran
- 24 Pete Visclosky
- 25 Rush D. Holt
- 26 Chellie Pingree
- 27 Barney Frank
- 28 Mike Honda
- 29 Jim McGovern
- 30 Don Young
- 31 Frank Pallone, Jr.
- 32 Charles Bass
- 33 Richard E. Neal
- 34 Tim Ryan
- 35 Grace F. Napolitano
- 36 Laura Richardson
- 37 Gerry Connolly
- 38 John Carney

- 39 Candice S. Miller
- 40 Leonard Boswell
- 41 John Yarmuth
- 42 Betty Sutton
- 43 David Wu
- 44 Jerrold Nadler
- 45 Andre Carson
- 46 Gwen Moore
- 47 Gene Green
- 48 Brad Miller
- 49 Lynn C. Woolsey
- 50 Russ Carnahan
- 51 Donna F. Edwards
- 52 Jared Polis
- 53 John P. Sarbanes
- 54 Niki Tsongas
- 55 Mike Thompson
- 56 Hank Johnson
- 57 John Kline
- 58 John Lewis
- 59 Christopher S. Murphy
- 60 David Price
- 61 Pete Stark
- 62 John Conyers, Jr.
- 63 Raul R. Labrador
- 64 Diana DeGette
- 65 Mike Quigley
- 66 Cynthia M. Lummis
- 67 Mark S. Critz
- 68 Colleen W. Hanabusa
- 69 Howard Coble
- 70 Todd Russell Platts
- 71 Randy Hultgren

- 72 Bobby Scott
- 73 David N. Cicilline
- 74 Maxine Waters

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